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ABSTRACT

In 1920, there were only 52 junior colleges in the United States and only 8,000 students. Today there are over 1,200 two-year institutions with over 4,000,000 students in attendance. All but nine of the nation's congressional districts have at least one community college. Today, more than one third of the nation's undergraduates are enrolled in two-year institutions. By building more facilities, by locating them in more places, and by fighting for low tuition, America's two-year institutions have led a social revolution and become the cutting edge of higher education. There are four bridges that those in higher education must help to build. First, higher education must build new bridges between colleges and the school systems of this nation. Second, higher education must build a better relationship between the world of learning and the world of work. Third, it's time for higher education to face up to the impact of mass communication and build a bridge between the classroom and technology. Finally, higher education must also begin to build bridges among the nations of the world. Community colleges can and must take the initiative in helping build these global bridges. (Author)

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Keynote Address of

Ernest L. Boyer

United States Commissioner of Education

at the fifty-eighth annual convention of the

American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

Atlanta, Georgia

Monday, April 10, 1978

I

I'm convinced that when the final history of this century has been written, the community college chapter will be one of the most exciting and significant.

In 1920, there were only 52 junior colleges throughout the land and only 8,000 students.

Today we have over 1200 two-year institutions with more than 4 million students in attendance.

All but nine of the Nation's Congressional districts have at least one community college within their boundaries.

And today more than one third of our Nation's undergraduates are enrolled in two-year institutions.

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By building more facilities, by locating them in more places, and by fighting for low tuition, America's two-year institutions have led a social revolution, in this Nation.

--And it's not an accident that they have.

o o o

They have opened college doors to millions of traditionally by-passed students. They have kept pace with dramatic social changes. And they have understood with great clarity just

who their students are,
what they do,
and what they need, to economically and socially excel.

The community colleges have kept in touch with the Nation's major social changes.

- o You've understood that today's young people mature physically two full years earlier than did their grandparents 50 years ago.
- o You've understood the significance of the changing work patterns in this Nation. In 1900, the average American work week was 62 hours; by 1945 it had dropped to 43; and today it is 36½ hours.

o You've recognized that America's "baby boom" has now become an "adult age bulge." You know, in this decade alone, the number of Americans in the 50-59 age bracket will rise by 17 percent--and the number of those over 60 will increase by 35 percent.

The Nation's community colleges have, in short, become the cutting edge of higher education--and your achievements have been unparalleled.

But here I wish to introduce a sober second thought. While higher education has made great progress in the past, I happen to believe that our colleges and universities will face even more consequential challenges in the days ahead.

--and--once again--I believe it will be the community colleges which will lead the way.

This morning I'd like to talk about 4 areas where I believe your leadership will be absolutely crucial--

four bridges that those of us in higher education must help to build.

First, higher education must build new bridges between our colleges and the school systems of this Nation.

Over 50 years ago--

Henry Clinton Morrison observed that we don't have a school system; we have a layer cake arrangement, with

- o elementary school
- o high school
- o and college

separate from one another.

Instead of this separation and fragmentation, higher education must work toward connections.

One hundred years ago, when colleges admitted only a handful of high school graduates, they could carry on in splendid isolation--but the simple truth is that since the great avalanche of students which followed World War II, educators at <u>all</u> levels are being called upon to serve a common group of students.

- o And yet--unhappily--our structure has never quite caught up with the social facts of life.

- o We continue to operate our institutions as if they were isolated islands.
- o Elementary and high school teachers infrequently meet together.
- o College administrators rarely sit down with their pre-college counterparts.
- o Universities fix admission standards without consulting colleagues in the schools.

And some senior college academics have still not quite faced up to the community college revolution in our midst.

I believe it's time to call a halt to all this fragmentation. It's time for educators from the separate levels to focus occasionally on education, rather than on their separate institutions.

In 1945, Harvard College produced its now famous general education report, commonly called the "Redbook".

- o The nations had been devastated by a terrible war, and the Redbook called for a general education curriculum to give new meaning to a shattered world.

- o Colleges and universities all across the country copied Harvard's proposals for reform--which, incidentally, the Harvard faculty did not adopt.

What is less well remembered is that more than half of the Redbook focused -- not on the collegiate course of study -- but on the secondary school.

Interestingly enough, over 50 years before the famous Redbook--when only 29 percent of America's young adult population was going on to college--the Nation's leading educators, led by Charles Eliot of Harvard, were troubled by the lack of coordination.

- o At that time, each level was charging off quite independently.
- o Each level was adding years of study to its program.
- o And each level was designing curriculum on its own.

In the midst of this confusion, a committee of ten was formed--composed of school and college people--to build a better academic sequence.

I believe the time for such leadership has arrived again. I'd like to see a national panel organized of elementary, secondary, community college, and university leaders--to look at the total academic situation. Such a panel might look at some very basic questions:

1. How can we teach the basic skills?

2. How can the junior high school provide smooth transition between the lower and the upper grades?

3. How can the senior high school provide more options while still promoting excellence?

4. How can the high school and the college general education curriculum be more sharply focused and more fully integrated?

5. How can we work together and serve the older student?

These are the education issues we must confront today.

The goal is to recognize that educators at all levels should serve students, not isolated institutions. And once again I'm convinced the community college--which more than any other is a bridging institution--has a strategic role to play.

Building a bridge between the campus and the world of work it seems to me is an urgent challenge for all of higher education. And I believe that our two-year institutions -- where the reality of work is already a centerpiece in learning -- will help to lead the way.

Second, I believe higher education must build a better relationship between the world of learning and the world of work.

Let me state the issue as pointedly as I can:

> Everything we know about society -- and about ourselves -- tells us that our choice of work, our vocation, is overwhelmingly important in the shaping of our values and in determining the quality of our lives. And I believe our universities and colleges--except for community colleges perhaps--have been most negligent in their failure to confront this essential fact.

We hear a lot of talk these days about "liberal vs. vocational" education, and it's suggested that our collegiate traditions are demeaned if they lead directly to a job.

Such a view not only distorts the present, it denies the past.

Even that great center of academic sophistication, Harvard College, was founded not only to defend the Chrisitan faith, but also to prepare young men for jobs: the ministry, law, medicine, teaching, and professions pursued by the privileged class.

My point is this: The realities of earning a living have always been a part of the collegiate tradition, and we should be honest enough to affirm this fact -- to ourselves and to our students.

It is true, of course, that some work is not vocation, and that some jobs are not uplifting, but degrading.

But our problem of relating work to higher education cannot be so easily dismissed. The truth is that many new kinds of useful, challenging, and crucial jobs have emerged in recent years, and yet educators on the college campuses still confer prime legitimacy on those jobs which have been around the longest and which we like the best.

Because of tradition, lethargy, ignorance, and snobbery, we make mindless distinctions between what is vocationally legitimate and illegitimate for our students. Such distinctions have led to equally mindless choices about what we can and cannot offer at the college.

It's alright, some say, to prepare to be a doctor, but it's less alright to be a nurse.

It's alright to be an engineer, but a computer programmer is off limits.

Teaching college is just great, but teaching elementary school is something else again.

To dig the ruins of the past is a respectable objective, but to work with ruined lives in an urban jungle -- a much more demanding task -- is not so worthy.

To read what has been written in the past is fine, but to aspire to write about the present -- as a journalist perhaps --

is not quite legitimate at many colleges.

What logic is used

- o by those who make distinctions such as these?
- o By those who guard so arbitrarily the portals of vocation?
- o By those who -- by the curriculum they offer -- determine for their students which work is honorable and which is not?

I'm convinced it's time to confront the subject of "vocation" as a profoundly serious course of study, and it's time to mak the study of work itself a part of the new common core.

Above all, our colleges should be places where students come to understand that work -- for most of us -- is an expression of "who we are" and "where we fit." "I work, therefore I am," may overstate the case, but it speaks to our condition.

Third, I believe it's time for higher education to face up to the impact of mass communication and build a bridge between the classroom and technology.

The simple truth is that in the past 25 years there has been an information revolution in our midst which most schools and colleges have hardly recognized and only vaguely understand.

Forty-five years ago we were all more isolated and more innocent.

When I was young there was, of course, no television in our home.

I was 12 years old before we purchased our first radio.

We did receive a daily newspaper, and the National Geographic, which I eagerly devoured as soon as it arrived.

Our Model A took us on short excursions from our Ohio home, rarely more than 100 miles or so.

As I look back on those early years, school was the central learning place. The teacher--for better or for worse--was the key source of knowledge, and the classroom was the intellectual window to the world. (It was only later on that I learned just how clouded that window could sometimes be.)

Today that world I knew is ancient history. Young children--2 to 5 years old--now watch television over 4 hours every day, nearly 30 hours every week. That's more than 1,500 hours every year, and by the time a youngster enters first grade he or she has had 6,000 hours of television viewing.

This same TV saturation continues after school begins, and very often the traditional teacher is bypassed. A new source of information has emerged.

The point is this: Paperbacks, magazines, television, and travel now compete on equal footing with the classroom and the book.

Today--for better or for worse--Archie Bunker is better known than Silas Marner, Fellini is more influential than Faulkner, and the six o'clock news is more compelling than the history text.

What are we to make of all of this?

In the decade just ahead, formal education will increasingly be linked to television, to the library, and to travel. We will begin to use these "other" learning centers as supplements to the classroom, and view them as enrichments rather than as threats.

All of this means that our schools and colleges, while protecting their intellectual freedom, cannot stand alone. These institutions are woven into the social fabric of the Nation, and they must become engaged.

I'm convinced we can modify our academic schedules. We can expand the campus to meet the changing needs of students. We can enrich the classroom and the book--while still promoting academic excellence, which is absolutely vital.

Finally, I'm convinced higher education must also begin to build bridges among the nations of the world.

I happen to believe that a great international drama is unfolding with great rapidity.

Suddenly we are beginning to confront an agenda that affects the 4 billion inhabitants of planet Earth.

The harsh truth is that the human race continues to expand at a rate of 200,000 people every day.

- That's 73 million more people every year.
- And every day more than 800 million people face gnawing hunger, living literally from hand to mouth.
- Tensions over resources grow more acute, and the quality of our environment is threatened.

The questions of the future then are these:

- o Where will we get our food, and how can it be appropriately distributed?
- o What about our energy supply, and how can it be equitably shared?
- o How can we reduce the poisions in the atmosphere?
- o Can we have a proper balance between population and the life-support system of this planet Earth?
- o And how can we live together, with civility, in a climate of constraint?

These are a few of the transcendent issues which today's young people--and all of us--must begin to think about and talk about with great care.

And yet, confronted with these transcendent questions, most of us have still not placed our own lives and the lives of our institutions in clear perspective.

- Most of us are still woefully ignorant of our planet Earth.

I'm convinced that:

- Education must focus on a new curriculum, one that gives us a clear vision of the unity of our world, in a social and physical sense as well.
- Education must teach us that all our actions on this planet, physical or social, are intimately interwoven and irrevocably interlocked.

And I believe our community colleges can and must take the initiative in helping to build these global bridges.

- There has been a shocking attitude in higher education that it was somehow "illegitimate" for our two-year institutions to concern themselves with global education.
- It has been snobbishly proposed that this is senior college turf -- as if 35 percent of our higher education students could be cut off from the significant issues of our time.

I reject absolutely such disturbing nonsense. Indeed, I'm convinced that the two-year colleges not only have a right to establish international linkages -- they should lead the way!

- o I applaud this association's International/Intercultural Consortium, with 54 member institutions, which aims to internationalize the curriculum, and to bring the campus to the world.
- o I applaud your regional conferences on international issues,
- o I applaud your U.S.-Canadian exchange program, your A.I.D.-assisted project for Nigerian government-sponsored students,
- o And I applaud your study tours for community college leaders...

...programs like these demonstrate your commitment to higher education's new challenge: educating for interdependence.

I'm convinced that these programs are absolutely crucial and that they need your strength and your commitment in the months and years ahead.

For if we do not give our students world perspective and teach them to live together with civility and constraint -- we will have mortgaged our future on the short term satisfactions of today.

A priority for the Office of Education in Washington is international education.

Some recent examples of how OE is striving for international understanding through education include:

- Our role in the effort to help establish a Presidential Commission on Foreign Language and International ~~Studies~~.

The Commission shall:

- recommend means for directing public attention to the importance of foreign language and international studies for improved communication and understanding in an increasingly interdependent world.

- o recommend ways to extend the knowledge of other civilizations to the broadest population base possible and to build these topics into the general curricula for students of all ages at all levels of study throughout the nation.
- o address correlation between language study/international studies to emerging manpower needs.

The Commission will establish the Global Perspectives Task Force, which will seek to:

- o help students become aware that the nations of the world are increasingly more interdependent, to learn to see themselves as participants in the interests of other nations, and to help them develop the skills and attitudes necessary for effective cooperation with all peoples.
- o infuse an international dimension throughout all levels of American education to help make education more relevant to an increasingly interdependent world.
- o identify relationships between problems of intercultural understanding within the U.S. and between the U.S. and other countries.

- o foster international collaborative scholarship and linkage between education institutions and leaders on basic problems of mankind (energy, environment, population).
- o designate an international education day, the first in a series of forums designed to address issues in global education.

Leading scholars and educators in international education will participate in an annual global seminar April 25 as part of a day-long series of events sponsored by the Office of Education and the White House.

This seminar is a part of International Education Day activities being marked in Washington. The forum theme will be, "Global Interdependence: A new Challenge for Education."

Twenty-five key international education leaders and scholars will discuss new directions for American education in internationalism.

International Education Day activities will be capped with an award ceremony and reception for Senator Fulbright at the Original Smithsonian Institution

Building, in Washington, D.C. HEW Secretary Joseph Califano will present an award to Senator Fulbright for his contribution to international education.

One final note--

After man had first traveled into space,

Archibald MacLeish--one of our most gifted poets--penned a verse which spoke of the perspective which must be captured by our students.

MacLeish wrote--

To see the Earth as it truly is

--small and blue

--beautiful--in that eternal silence where it floats

--is to see <u>ourselves</u> as riders on the earth together.

Brothers--

on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold.

Brothers who <u>now</u> know that they are truly brothers.

We do not yet know that we are truly brothers.

And yet I'm confident that as we better educate ourselves and make more sensitive the human spirit, we will indeed see ourselves as brothers and we will prevent this angry, frightening world from self-destruction.

# # #